





Gift of

Mira Kosicki Walilko '37

GOLDEN FALCON



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GOLDEN FALCON

BY

ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN

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To
MY SISTER
ALICE
WHO IS
SILVER AND JET
AND WIND ON THE SEA

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GOLDEN FALCON

GOLDEN FALCON

He sees the circle of the world
 Alive with wings that he
Was born to rend; his eyes are stars
 Of amber cruelty.

God lit the fires in his eyes
 And bound swords on his feet,
God fanned the furnace of his heart
 To everlasting heat.

His two eyes take in all the sky,
 East, West, North, and South,
Opposite as poles they burn;
 And death is in his mouth.

Death because his Maker knew
 That death is last and best,
Because he gives to those he loves
 The benison of rest.

Golden, cruel word of God
 Written on the sky!
Living things are lovely things,
 And lovely things must die.

HAWK'S BEAUTY

I have seen beauty in a hawk
Run forth like flame across the land,
His eyes like amber bought with blood
In splendid Samarcand.

Terrible grace and beauty sheer
As cold, curved scimitars of kings,
The cruel beauty of whet steel
In his upcurling wings.

He hung against the wind and moved
Not the least feather as he rode,
Flexing disdainful wings to gales
That bore him as they flowed.

Upon the wind the hedge he conned,
His shadow standing deathly still.
I saw him drop like a plummet line;
My spine twanged with his kill.

Beautiful pain that cuts across
The tangled meshes of rank weal,
Swords and bullets, lovely hawk
Swift to strike and heal!

HYMN OF HUNGER

O holy, holy hunger
That holds the spinning earth
High and taut in empty space,
Like a top that whirls apace
Singing to itself in mirth!

O holy hunger that has sent
The young man off the mark
Like a runner at white heat
With a hymn for his two feet
And the mouth-line of a shark!

Hunger trumpets in the cock
Avid for the day,
Hunger blows the silver flutes
Of crickets nibbling at the roots
Of the drowsy twilight hay.

Hunger was the name they had
For the white Ysolt,
Hunger was the other name
For Tristram when he was a flame
And a lithe, unbroken colt.

Hunger plows the graveyards up
Into plots for grain,
Hunger makes what lovers do
And the death-twitch of the thew
Patterns of the same white pain.

Hold me, hunger, by the hand,
By the lips and eyes!
I am bound along the way
Where the meek lambs leap and play,
Where the golden falcon flies.

TALL MEN WITH TRUMPETS

Tall men with trumpets,
Lions with cold eyes,
Tigers with the patterned skin
The artful jungle dyes,
Staring bitterns brooding
On evil aeons old—
Hunger has divinity
And beauty manifold.

Captains of lost ships
Sitting by the sea,
Boys who dream October
And apples on the tree,
Hawks hanging in the blue
Like swords of Damocles,
The bee going bulletwise—
Prayer is made of these.

The Maker sits and hungers
Like a gull at dawn;
He casts forth his nebulae
Like the frogs' cold spawn;
His heart is in the great whales
And amoeba in the tide,
He goes to their feasting
As bridegroom to the bride.

His mouth is in the marrow
 Of the slaughtered deer,
His eye is in the eye
 Of the yearning mariner,
His lips are on the clover
 Gentle heifers take,
He pilots the wild geese that groan
 For their hunger's sake.

THE HERRING

Under the pallid
Tents of the North
Hunger kissed Beauty,
And herring came forth,

An epic of yearning
Writ in white words,
Bodies symmetrical
Bladed like swords.

Gulls with their horny nibs
Bit from above,
Whales sucked them in below;
They moved like love,

Love's geometrical,
Rapt avalanche,
Horses of Askalon,
Hounds of Provence.

A million keen noses
At a million tails—
There was less power
In all Tyre's sails.

An unmoored continent
Through the flood hissed
Bound forth to consummate
A cosmic tryst.

Love, light, and straight speed,
Rhythm of blood,
Songs that built far stars
Moved in the flood.

Shoals of far suns,
Spawned nebulae,
Moved through the dark,
And they through the sea,

Straight arrows that God
Shot from his bow
Cleaving abysmal dark,
God's ancient foe.

Dante descried them
In angels he saw
Fashion concentric
The vast rose of law.

The will and the eaning
God has in each limb
Surged and applauded
The handwork of him:

"The dream that I dreamt
And whet like a knife
Pierces the waters,
The dream I called life!"

HER SOUL IN EVERY PART OF HER

Sinful it is to say her soul keeps house
In the dark, narrow hall of bone, her head;
Spiders haunt such places, and gray thoughts
Hang silent there like gnats and flies sucked dead.

No. . . . She who has the sunset in her palms
Has her soul in every part and place;
Her arms have reason, and her limbs can think
Like the limbs of runners in a race.

Her hair is running mercy like the rain,
Her throat is eloquence beyond the rose;
The comeliness and beauty of her flesh
Sing like angels underneath her clothes.

She thinks as white anemones must think
When they spread themselves to April's air;
Her thoughts shine through her skin as angels' do;
Her least, shy touch is something of a prayer.

THE CHARM

Mummy and ambergris,
Unicorn's horn,
Pearls for which divers
Had their throats torn,
Green mayflies stellified
In amber stones,
Bezoar that cuts apart
Great mountains' bones—
All yellowed storybooks
Wise worms have bored
I will ransack to add
To my rare hoard.
Moonstones in meteors,
Mandrakes that sound
When their roots bifurcate
Are torn from the ground—
These I will mingle
To make up the charm
To keep the love burning
That burns to my harm.

I will enforce you
In secret to be
A tyrant merciful
To any but me.
I will unleash in you
Lean hounds of desire
To track me in dreams
With eyes like a fire.

I will uncoil in you
The whip for the slave
To keep my blood boiling
Up to the grave.

The sunlight may prove you
Marble and flesh,
But darkness will see you
Slip through the mesh
Into eternity
Long as a breath,
Into the freedom
Where love is a death.

Horn of the unicorn,
Ichor the bees
Sweat when death shadows
Their bright granaries,
Fragrance of holy bones
In the tomb laid—

These things will keep you
Whet like a blade.

BIRDS AND LADIES

I never knew a wonder that could match
The wonder of tall schooners on the sea,
Unless it were some women as they walked
Or birds with wings ungirt and shaken free.

Unless a wind will lend them swollen hearts,
Sailing ships are dead and idle things;
But birds have wind in all their hollow bones
And have it folded in their folded wings.

A schooner has her sure ways beautiful
As her builder dreamed and planned them all;
But no one yet has dared to guess how right
The steps of some of womankind will fall.

No weaver yet has woven a wild-rose;
No mason built the palaces of frost.
Some women, when they move, make me believe
Those plans alone are lovely which are lost.

WHITE PEACOCK

White unicorns are easier to catch
Than your compelling, flying mystery;
Unseen it presses on me everywhere
Like winds upon one far at middle sea.

I know that I shall never tame your hair
To my warm touch, and I shall never take
Your beauty wilful as an April snow
In any snares my soul and body make.

You cover up the evening of your eyes,
You hide the lonely singer in your breast;
Laughter you have for all and sprightliness.
And I find beauty in you and no rest.

The stiff white peacock is as cold and gay;
I feel the chill, smooth marble that you seem.
O lovely for the words you never say!
O beautiful for dreams you never dream!

THE COCK

Desire in feathers, flame on toes,
Passion ruddier than the rose,
 New-blue steel and will on springs,
 Trumpets and all brazen things!
The daystar waits upon your hail,
Taut, naked symbol of the male!

Helen, who had hosts to die
At the melting of her eye,
 Bowed her white neck to your thin
 Clarion that leads day in,
Put her pride and love away
To yield up man to man the day.

Thrice one night you arched and crew
When the sky rent through and through
 And faces lighter than the light
 Glared upon the spawn of night
As they dragged to nail to wood
Christ's fierce and holy manlihood.

Beauty that hates all that is dead,
Beauty of strong wings outspread,
 Loveliness of wrath and heat,
 Ardor arching scornful feet,
Gale of will that tears and rends
And sows life to the sky's far ends!

Spark that never time puts out,
Force that spins the suns about,
 Male and majesty, first source
 Of all that runs the vital course,
All marks the time your feet have trod,
Sower of the seed of God!

WILD GESE

Beauty is coming north again
Slanting eager as the rain;
 With necks like arrows on a bow
 Across the sky the wild geese go.

Beauty is coming moulded by
High winds of the upper sky
 Into shapes that burn to be
 In a patterned symmetry.

Loveliness comes like a host
Of swift ships headed for a coast,
 Every sail and every keel
 Pointed at a common weal.

Comeliness in company,
Every wing where it should be,
 The great wild geese with necks like kings
 Help each other with their wings.

Keen and clean as young desire,
Straight as tongues of evening fire,
 Beauty is coming welded bright
 From the anvil of Spring's might.

THE FIREBIRD

The winds of all the world are hushed,
The thunder lifts above the hill
Its splendid brows and bends and comes
To work its will.

A bird is flitting through the trees,
The flame is on its crest and breast;
It has no song, its loveliness
Can never rest.

The clouds come over with the dark,
The eyes are troubled and the mind.
The bird is pecking for the food
It cannot find.

Something is hidden. No one finds
The magnet that draws on the doom.
One waits and feels a worming spark
Crawl in the gloom.

The bird pants through the trees like fire;
The thunder-cloud is low above.
One feels a sudden blade come home,
A blade called love.

WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME, MOON?

Over my roof the full moon rides
Tugging at the earth's great sides.
Piling the tides in a silver heap,
She looks at me. I cannot sleep.

She peered in over my window-sill;
I dreamt of climbing up a hill
That looked on sights no man must see;
I woke, and found her eyes on me.

What do you want of me, moon, that you
Tug so at my heart and thew?—
I know you a liar, a sainted cheat
Old lovers fancied cool and sweet.

I know your chastity is a lie;
Your great and curious, steady eye
Pries into every lane that covers
From all but you the limb-locked lovers.

I know the maid who trusts in you
Creeps home at last to sit and rue.
I know the satyr from you was born
And has from you his urgent horn.

Dogs that are the friends of man
Bark as hard as bark they can
When they see you riding high,
Unholy huntress of the sky!

I know that madmen are your friends.
I know that all the earth's dim ends
Are gathered in your hands like reins,
Dim desires and moth-like pains.

Are you the queen of life indeed
Who fills man's flesh and bids him breed?
Have you the crystal key to keep
That you eye me so I cannot sleep?

CLOWN OF THE ZODIAC

I will sit and sit austere;
The mummers of the rolling year
Shall not draw me from my room
To dance the ancient dance of doom!

So I closed my lattice tight
And left the stars the floor of night,
Left the ballroom where love goes
Dancing, dying in the rose.

But the silences grew vast
In the room I shuttered fast,
And I heard small hands that knocked
Rhythmic at the heart I locked.

Out and in and out and in
Angels and the shapes of sin
Danced along my heart's dim floor
In the pattern planned of yore.

Snow and sun, no man can lock
His house to mummers come to mock—
Death, creation, love, and scorn,
The tyranny of night and morn!

The goat went sniffing hot as sin
For fragrance of the feminine,
Urgent fish swam down the flood
Of my yearning, tidal blood.

Vigor welled like waterbrooks,
Spring rode in on horny hooks
Of the ram that walks the heart
When the dandelions start.

I was a bull, and I ran bare
Children in the flowing air,
I was creeping cruelty,
I the crab that crawls the sea.

I was thunder and the light
In the lion's eyes at night,
I was pure, and I was clean
As Ruth was when she went to glean.

I had venom in my bones
Like any scorpion under stones,
I was a proper Minos-man,
Mad as ever centaur ran.

I was ice, and I was fire,
Cool, intolerable desire,
I sat at home, and I sinned double
Without travelling for my trouble.

Hate and love I had in me
Deeper, deeper than the sea,
I raised more flowers, snowed more snow
Than the rolling years can show.

I the Goat, Fish, Waterman,
The Ram, the Bull, the Twins in span,
 Crab and Lion, Virgin wan,
 The secret, stinging Scorpion,
The Weigher with his balanced pan,
And the Centaur Arrowman.

I was all the clowns who skip
When Almighty cracks the whip,
 I a doomed young jumping-jack
 In the Circus Zodiac!

MAN-CHILD

My father had the mirth on him
And drops of agony
That night he blew his strength white-hot
To mould the man-child me.

He shook and trembled like a star
Where the day begins,
He twisted strands of white, cool good
In with hot, dark sins.

He made a creature who would burn
To match the bull's grave power,
A creature who would sit and see
Great God in a flower.

He rested, and he knew his work
Was pleasing and was right,
Animal to crawl the earth
With mind on ache with light.

He turned him over, and he slept
Lordly and unbraced;
An angel hobbled on the lawn
A goat below the waist.

An angel hobbled who would feel
Earth's kisses on his limbs,
Mouths of roses, mouths of clay,
Sweet as seraphim's.

I SHALL BE IN OTHER PLACES

The death-watch ticking in my wall
Tells me that my house will fall.

One day there will come the wind
To the place where I have sinned,
Prayed and dreamed and little done
And find but grass-blades in the sun.

But I shall be in other places,
Carving wrinkles on new faces,
Helping others seek and find
Love that turns out seeds and rind,
Building others dreams that soon
Look like dust-heaps on the moon.

Oh, I shall still be sad and merry,
Full of red lust as the cherry,
Frozen into ice and snow
Because the law reads thus and so.
I shall hate like any snake
And love and worship till I ache.

For my house may fall to grass
And the blundering mole may pass
Through the nave my ribs have groined,
Yet the light and dark that joined
To create the man-thing me
Are spawners ranker than the sea.

THE HERON

God made the night the loveliest;
And so he loves to go
Walking with the friendly night
That treasures silence so.

With the waves to comfort him
That come across the sea
There's little place for sin to hold
Or wrath or agony.

All the things he taught to sing
Have nothing now to say,
All the things he taught to soar
Night has put away.

There is but the silver moon
Alone in all the night
Keeping pace as on he goes
Free of wrong and right.

It must have been like this he walked
Before the morning stars
Sang to see the world he made
That every creature mars.

And all his work seems still to do,
Larks and lambs and rain,
Things too fair to spoil and make
Move shining in his brain.

I know God finds night lovelier
Than day, for all its light,
For I have seen a heron go
Dreaming across the night.

THE RAM

A white ram rears against a wall
With horns curled close in scorn.
The wall stands firm; yet he must butt,
For that end he was born.

Beyond there are unnibbled fields
And sheep that ean for young.
Like a hammer forging steel
His head is reared and swung.

The rhythm of that beating head
Is built into our hearts
And into the volcanic sun's
Incandescent darts.

The passion of those bleeding horns
Is on each star that glows
And on the briefest petallings
Of a Summer rose.

You Ram who shape the universe
And Lord who bleed to death,
Your hunger is our being fed,
Your dying is our breath!

THE SPIDER

Is it a spider that perceives all things,
Sitting at the center of all things,
Feeling the slightest tremor of all wings?
Is it a spider at the world's dim heart?

His line is gone out to the farthest star,
He feels the lightest knockings, the faint jar
Of doorways in our hearts unlocked to love.

His silken lines enmesh the birds above,
The fish beneath, the men who go between;
And all are his, until their bones lie clean.

Swords are gossamers to his soft threads
Which tie us hand and foot to mortal beds.
More translucent than the morning dew
He spreads his snares; and none of us pass
through

And reach the beauty that we know abides
Unending always on the other sides
Of all things that men see and love and lose.
He sprinkles dust of stars on our young thews;
Yet when we spread our wings first, they are
taken,

We beat and flutter till the gilt is shaken
From his vain gift and mockery of flight,
The wings he gives us in our mortal plight.
The stars also are his; they pant and rage,
Burn and beat like fledglings in a cage
Around, around till they grow gray and age
And die with freedom shining in their eyes
From the untraversed, endless, outer skies.

Such love is his to keep us we must die.
He will not, will not trust us from his eye.
His eyes are everywhere; we must not dream
That he is of our image; his eyes gleam
In flaming rows around his jealous head.
They see in every corner; hot and red
They pierce the marrow of the bones and see
Our best beloved and hidden mystery
Of hate and love as clear as sunlit brooks;
There are no shields of shadow when he looks.
We give gifts to a neighbor; and he knows
Our neighbor's wife is comely as the rose.
Bound blithe to war, we bid a light farewell;
He knows our bosom is black ice and hell.
"Thy will be done," the child lies like a flower
Frost-nipt in May; in such a naked hour
He sees lies on our tongues, the truth that flames
Silent in our skulls. Our lusts and shames
He knows and sets them down by all their names.
The brain reels under eyes nothing may dim.
He sees us always, and we see not him.
No one has seen him! O agony!
O eyes that burn the bottom of the sea!

Waiting, waiting till our vain wings tire,
He sits and sees us with his eyes on fire;
His feet inform him that our wings are furled,
His feet that hold the lines of all the world,
Exquisite nerves about our sinews curled.
Our strength lies still at last. . . . And he
descends

Like lightning. The great sky's four woven ends
Unravel.

Ah, the light is on his face!

He is the stricken in the mortal chase,
His are the pinions tangled in his snares,
His are the sinews that his strong hand tears,
His is the agony and edge of pain!
Death's Maker with his own death burns again
And tastes the fiercest joy he has of all
Of making things so fragile they must fall,
Break, die exquisitely, and so once more
Live lovelier for having at their core
The everlasting passion of a flaw,
A living crystal that can mirror awe,
Beauty whose heart is death, love, hate, and grow
More beautiful for crimson mixed with snow,
Wiser and innocent, older and new,
Fierce as Aldeberan, gentle as dew.
Lion and lamb, goodness and sin,
The ageless heart of the world sucks beauty in,
Sucks in the life it sent through all the earth,
Systole of death and diastole of birth.
Beauty comes home again washed white by tears,
Joy comes more beautiful rainbowed with fears,
Sin like a child comes home, pain like a friend;
And the song and the song they sing
Has never and never an end!

O beauty of extreme and mortal pain,
O heart that takes its life-blood back again,
O life that dies still to be born again,
God is the lover at the world's dim heart!

FOR ONE WHO IS REPOSE

I think the ladies with the even hair
And arms of brittle, keen, clear comeliness
Who troop around Greek vases and who bear
Correct, cool apples have a magic less
Than you who are as sure as nervous thews
Of eager racing-horses as they rise
Over hedges side by side and choose
Exquisite airy paths before our eyes.

For every thought of yours springs from your
brain
As even and as right as sequent flowers
That line the year with harmony and law.
Your ways are day and night. The falling rain
Has not a surer pattern through the hours
Than you who make repose a thing of awe.

SILHOUETTE

Clear, clean, and sharp
As edges of old lace,
Haunting as a harp
Hangs this mysterious face,
Young years and years ago,
Vivid as the gleams
Of icicles and snow
When the daystar beams.
Lips open to desire,
Curls vibrant as fine wire,
Lash poised like the wing
Of a butterfly
That spends like a king
The day it must die.

Were the eyes blue?
Were the eyes gray?—
Only the gods know true,
And they will not say.
Did she fare well
The keen way she passed?—
Only the earth can tell
That she turned to at last.
Names and the bloom of roses
The wordless dust encloses.
Silver and jet
And wind on the sea,
Unmarred we have yet
The lace that was she.

O LADY MORE FRAGILE THAN THE NEW MOON

O lady more fragile than the slim new moon,
Surely the gods will have you perish soon!

For such a crescent grace is not to wear;
It must go the way of flowing air,
Of Mayday songs at sunrise, dew on trees,
Love, and the snowdrifts of anemones.

Linger not to see the years bestow
On your cheeks the roses in full blow,
Linger not to find yourself content
With such gifts as grudging age has lent.
Your empire is as brief as is the dew's
Or the wave-top's evanescent blues.

Go, while your beauty is like gentle pain,
Go, while still in flower stands the grain,
Go, before you know that your desire
Leads you to peace and not consuming fire!
Close up the bud before the rose turns white
And pour your eyes back into morning light.

PEACOCKS IN SNOW

O never a doubt but she will always be
Loveliest when the year in silence lies,
Widowed of music of each bird and tree,
And the blank snow flies.

Her color is silver and her place among
Snows and the things that have nothing to say ;
Her beauty will not have a single tongue
Say yea or nay.

From roses and green things she keeps apart,
Her soul within her is so green and warm ;
The wild-rose that she wears for her hot heart
Is lone as storm.

She has a beauty splendider ten-fold
Since fierce gods in her bosom lonely go
Like the queenly, sad, and bitter-cold
Peacocks in snow.

RETICENCE

I saw three deer go past my door at dawn.
With heads held high they filled their eyes
with light,
The ancient shyness that still tarries on
The ancient hills was in their cool delight.
Their hooves sank clean into the grass and rose
Clean out again and left the bells of dew
Unrung upon the blades save those they chose
To set their splaying prints on sharp and true.

So cool and so aloof are you. What heart
With love within it like a greyhound's cry
Would dare to press upon you? You must go
With morning's wonder on you still a part
Of earth's old reticence and I stand by
With no more comfort than a dream can
show.

OLD BALLAD

In a house with many blinds
Open neither night nor day
There is a room where revelry
Never sweeps the dust away.

*High and far the lone dove goes,
There is no pain to match the rose.*

In that chamber there is set
A table spread with fruit and wine,
At that board a lady sits
Like a lamp that waits to shine.

No rings are on her unwon hands,
Pearls would be wasted on her throat;
In her brain are eagles' wings,
And on her heart wide lilies float.

She never takes the fruit or wine
Because her lord comes never there.
She must wait. The spiders make
Their stealthy nets fast to her hair.

She sits behind her many blinds
Expecting sudden horns to call
And shake the room with jubilee
And let the sunlight through the wall.

The bubbles go up in the wine
Like silver birds and take their flight;
Above her level, patient brows
Her vibrant hair is turning white.

*High and far the lone dove goes,
There is no pain to match the rose.*

CRYSTAL

This woman is crystal. Through and through
her heart

One sees, and all is very white and clear.
One would not think the universe held blood
By any hues that in her heart appear.

Children she has; yet she is still a maid;
No lover yet has filled her emptiness.
She has no need of any part of man;
Her mind remains aloof from her caress.

Passion, when she was moulded, was away,
Blindness and Error, those dim angels, gone;
Pity at her begetting found no place
To lay her very comely touch upon.

One knows her perfectly, one catalogues
All the moods which through her bosom pass,
Nor ever knows the agonies she bears
Invisible and hopeless being glass.

MARRIAGE

There will be no need of splendid feet
 Upon the toppling towers of the round,
 Apocalyptic earth, no need of sound
That day our two souls for their marriage meet.
No flaming double wings will sprout from stone,
 No clay will blossom with a million eyes,
 Birds will not prophesy nor trees grow wise,
Nor stern archangels rise where seeds were sown.

Only your grave, clear eyes will catch a light
More beautiful, and more and less than sight;
 And you will bend your head and turn away,
 Finding not one of many words to say,
Because the ways of life are quiet, vast,
And peaceful as the star that fades the last.

A HOUSE BY CANDLELIGHT

Whoever has not seen his house made white
By a candle has not seen it right;
For a single candle in the night
 Puts wings of wonder on our things.

Chairs we sat upon by soulless day
Wake and move; strange lambent pinions sway
Out of the hearts of tables; pictures say
 Curious things that sound like wings.

Deep in the woodwork crystal creatures creep;
Endless avenues of starry sleep
Lead off in all smooth surfaces; and deep
 Whispers come like those of lovers.

The little crocks and jars stretch out their souls,
Their dusky, azure selves bulge from their bowls;
The room is full of fragile aureoles;
 And a god on the hearthstone hovers.

THE HOUR OF MOTHS

The little moths with eyes like pearls
Gaze at me through my pane,
This holy night so full of wings
Will not be mine again.

The earth is turning towards the dawn,
The stars go ever west,
An early bird still half in sleep
Twitters on the nest.

So few the moments left to be
Alone with silent mirth,
A sole and single candle flame,
Peace, and the turning earth.

So still it is that one could think
His body were a tree
Or lacework of a moth's white wing
Whose every rib can see.

Or any lovely thing whose skin
Drinks the holy night
And knows its beauty by a sense
More delicate than sight.

The trees in worship fill the world
With prayers benign and wise,
On all the altars of the night
Burn the moths' cool eyes.

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS

Upstairs the seven virgins shrilly sing
Whose limbs have grown like lilies tall and white;
They hold the room the Bridegroom set for them
Because they kept their wedding lamps alight.

But on the stairs the other seven still
Loiter and sing as clear as those above;
Their lamps are out, but shadows bring them bliss
And every idle moth a grace to love.

BALLAD FOR EPIPHANY

Tall kings rode down to Bethlehem
To see the King of all;
They found a babe with hands sealed close
As rosebuds new and small.

*The sheep are on the hilltop,
The rose is on the thorn;
All the stars bend down to earth,
And Christ the King is born!*

Kings came to see the Queen of Joy
In pearls and diamonds pass;
They saw a shy dame gathering
Daisies of Michaelmas.

*The ox is at the manger,
The daisy's on the height;
White wings of cherubim enfold
Four corners of the night.*

Rulers of the round earth rode
To hail the Prince of Stars;
They found peace and folded sheep
And cows at pasture-bars.

*The mother's at the cradle,
The dew is on the day;
Beauty walks with naked feet,
And Love is here to stay.*

WHITE FEET

In the common pageant of the years
He came to us, and we still cried our wares,
Laid our brick, and kept the Autumn fairs,
Amorous, backbiting, quick with jeers.
Between begetting sons and breaking steers
We had no time to let him show his airs
Of some ancient, death-struck king who bears
His soul to God and the cleansing rain of tears.

We left him to his friends, the trees and sky,
To cattle and the broken horse to teach
The brotherhood of all things marked to die.
Now that he has gone beyond the reach
Of any praise, we know there passed us by
The white and lovely feet of them that preach.

THE BROKEN VANE

Today a great wind came and broke the vane
Which has veered to meet the winds from Spain
For years upon my barn. It lay a white
And beautiful and broken thing, a sight
To make an angel sad or any swift
And bird-like thing. It nevermore would lift
Eyes or minds aloft to brood on cloud
Or wind or God. And it had swung so proud
Above the crawling things of day to day!
Some tall sea-captain wrought it; and he lay
Broken thus at last upon a bed,
He who had earth's four corners once to tread.

THE DIRIGIBLE

I heard laughter on the hills,
 Endlessly steady, rhythmic sound.
I thought, "The gods are laughing hard
 Who make the world go round!"

The solid hilltops shook and purred
 With their good-natured, cat-like mirth.
"They have their heads together now
 And plan some bright, new birth."

And so they did; for down the sky
 A-sudden came a blazing thing,
Alone and independent, feeling
 Its airy way like a king.

The startled clouds drew back from it;
 It went its primal way along
Like another universe
 Spilling enormous song.

L — PLAYS THE
HARPSICORD

It does not matter that her gown is red
Or that her arms are Dutch and full as sails;
Although she bends like burghers' wives at pies,
She stirs up beauty with her chiselled nails.

Thin as moonbeams through an attic loft
The notes fall under her sharp fingerings;
Exact, precise, her fingers reach and touch
The very cores of all the slender strings.

Rembrandt painted her, I think; hot red
Before her golden box from which she takes
Pearl after pearl and holds them to the light
So fast and lovely that the hushed heart aches.

TREES WERE MEANT FOR TABLES

Verses say too little or too much.

To think the pith of pines should come to such!

Trees straight enough to stand up to the gales
And bear the useful burden of great sails
Should not be broken on the wheel to make
Paper for such as nurse a mortal ache.

Trees were meant for tables and for cribs,

Arrows that fit exact between the ribs,

Handles for plows, an axe-helve, or a gate,
Things which are direct and quick and straight
The kind Creator never meant a tree
To be a lifted cross of agony.

TOWERS AND SILENCE

Towers and silence, all holy lonely things,
 Befriend me, now that Youth has fared afar
And I can feel no tears behind my eyes
 When I gaze upon the evening star.

I do not know what day Youth said farewell;
 But one blue day the trees all stood and sang
Together and together, and in my brain
 I heard great doors swing to with brazen clang.

And suddenly the winds were all too swift
 And clouds too high and glorious; and I knew
Youth had gone, and I was sole alone
 On an endless road where dead things grew.

And I was sole alone. . . . My feet moved on
 Along the road that leads through starry space
And never ends. O towers and silence, wrap
 Your holy, healing shadows round my face!

HE HOES

He hoes against the glooming west
Until his beard is full of dew.
The crows are home; but never yet
Has twilight found this farmer through.

His son is mated with a wife
Coarse and common as the weeds.
His hopes have fallen on a soil
Less fertile than his thrifty seeds.

Eighty years have bent his bones
And brought his chin down on his breast;
But still his arms swing at a work
So rhythmical it is a rest.

Sharp words and dirt are everywhere
In his house that once was clean.
His grand-daughters run with the men
And have a wormy fruit to glean.

He cuts the weeds away from corn
With a calm and ageless hate;
He does not care to go indoors
Until the hour has grown late.

He loves to be alone and see
His shadow lengthen without end
Until it lies across the world,
Across the house he could not tend.

God willing, death will find him there
Clean and shining as his hoe,
Standing on his two stiff feet,
And not a weed in any row.

THE MAKER

I know the Maker has the taste of death
In his mouth, for he has put his breath
 Into twilight songs the shy thrush knows.

I have seen his tender, great eyes close
When the crystals in a deer's eyes broke.
His wings are snapped and broken by the stroke
 That breaks the fragile grace of high wild
 ducks.

His blood is on the flower stem one plucks.
His teeth are in the hounds that tear the hare.
He lays the bones of things he loves most bare.

I know the Maker changes and repents.
He fills the rocks with his dry testaments
 Of seas he scooped and lifted to be land;
 A billion tiny sea-things bleach in sand.
Trees that knew the talking of the birds
Are tenanted by fishes without words.

He built the towers of the mastadons,
And threw down into ruins their huge
 brawns.

He armored lizards beautiful and vast
With a strength too beautiful to last.
He made Leviathan to feed on air,
And drove him to the watery hemisphere.

I know the Maker moves in paradox.
He spends his equal pains on mouse and ox,
 Stiff flowers of the crystal, sudden vines
 Of lightning. The field-daisies he designs

In nebulae of quietude and weaves
The wild-rose with a passion on its leaves.
 The nervous scissors of the swallows' wings
 He makes to cut symmetric patternings,
And he it is who lifts where all may see
The slow peace of an ancient growing tree.
 He shapes the single stars of cockerels' eyes,
 The nest of crystal mirrors for the flies.
He forges granite, and he spreads the bloom
On the bat-wings velvet in the gloom.
 He makes the mountains and the porcelain
 Of the robin's egg of skyey stain.
Cool cannonades of thunder are his pride
And heat of dandelions opened wide,
 The frost-work in the grain of burning ember,
 The flame on tips of icicles in December.
He lays the winding staircase of the snail
And charts the course the bee delights to sail.

I know my Maker moves and lives, for he
Is something strong and weary like the sea,
 Something strong and tender like the breast
 A woman has to give her lover rest,
Something that ebbs and floods with all the tides,
And has a mighty music that abides,
 Something fierce and lovely as the snake,
 Something so beautiful it brings an ache,
A holy, selfless thing like lambent fire,
A mortal, selfless thing like deep desire,
 A hurricane that shakes the world unseen,
 A greyhound running clean and lithe and lean,

The ecstasy that mortals call the rose!
My Maker lives because he dies and grows!

OUR NEIGHBOR

A sword is a keen thing
Too bright to hate;
Death is a neighbor
Who knocks at the gate
But once to borrow,
And then he's away.
No man so mean
As to say him nay.
Not for sugar or spice
This neighbor calls,
Or nets for swarmed bees,
Whetstones, or awls.

He asks only
For the crystal key
To the rooms in the brain
Where we put the sea,
Sunrise and blackbirds,
And a few women's faces,
Bright things to treasure
Like odd ends of laces.
He borrows and goes
With the key to the brain,
And we can lay hands
On nothing again.

APOLOGIA

I, made of clay inflamed with sun,
Something solid still have done.

I have made a book and bred

A son to read it when I'm dead.

I have kept the ancient law

And made my bricks without the straw.

I have seen a world designed

By a sculptor who is blind,

Hate rewarding love and gray

Swinish living for the day,

Fingers made to fit the rings,

Worship of the feel of things,

Wantons playing beauty's part,

Lust coiled ready under art,

Philosophy made out of streams

Of crawling, slimy things in dreams

Like the things that fear the day

When you roll a stone away.

I have seen the fleetest feet

Limp to graveyards down the street,

Seen the wisdom years bestowed

Trodden on beside the road.

I have watched life teem and grope

Like water through a microscope.

And I have written that a breath

Stronger than the smell of death

Breathes in the rose and makes men face

Tomorrow like young men who race.

I have written in my book
That the swooping falcons look
 Like the sunlit shafts of rain
 God uses on his growing grain,
That what men call the dance of doom
Is a secret, mighty loom
 Weaving at a mighty pattern,
 Knave and noble, saint and slattern,
All beautiful and all for all,
Lumbering whale and minnow small,
 Kinsmen by the hunger bond
 Moving to a goal beyond.
I have written that I found
Pity in the thin, high sound
 Of a bullet on its way
 To make a midnight in the day,
Mercy in the lurking snare,
And angels in a woman's hair,
 Love in death, a lovely plan
 In that jungle called a man,
God in flesh, a hymn in bees,
And heaven in a place of trees.

Lies?—God knows! The stars won't tell.
Not a single fiend of hell
 Left in all the universe
 To threaten me beyond the hearse,
Not an angel, it may be,
To applaud at what I see!
 I was born too late to lean
 On the arms that are unseen.

But my little careless son
Some day will read what I have done;
 And looking at the high, cold stars,
 Perhaps he will not feel the bars
That often press against the face
When one has a want to chase.
 It may comfort him to know
 That one so like him's written so.

I have kept the ancient law,
I have written what I saw.

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